

I. An Historical Overview

A. CATHOLIC ROOTS IN THE PHILIPPINES³ IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Any history of Filipinos in the United States must begin with the history of Catholicism in the Philippines. In 1494, Pope Alexander VI ratified the Treaty of Tordesillas, which essentially divided the world of European exploration into two halves—the Americas were granted to the Spanish empire and Asia to the Portuguese empire. The Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), representing the Spanish empire, began his famous voyage around the world in 1519. He arrived in the Visayan region of the Philippines in 1521, which eventually led to the conversion of 2,200 natives in Cebu (see further discussion of *Santo Niño* in subsequent chapters). In 1565 a more formal Spanish expedition began under the leadership of Miguel López de Legaspi. Legaspi's expedition succeeded in establishing a foundation for a more sustained Spanish colonization in the Philippines. With the help of Augustinian friars, this mission expanded from Cebu and eventually reached Manila in 1578. In that year, Manila was constituted a bishopric under the archbishop of Mexico, who then sent the Dominican Domingo de Salazar to Manila in 1581 to become the first Catholic bishop of the Philippines. Ten years later, in 1591, Manila was made into a metropolitanate with three dioceses. By the end of the century, four missionary orders had been established, including the Augustinians (1565), the Franciscans (1577), the Jesuits (since 1581), and the Dominicans (1587). Part of the success that contributed to the spreading of the Catholic faith throughout the islands was due to the allotting of different regions in the Philippines to these specific religious communities. It was reported that by the end of the

3 The main resource for this section is taken from Samuel Hugh Moffett, "The Spaniards in the Philippines (1521-1800)" in *A History of Christianity in Asia 1500-1900*, Vol. II (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2005), 150-174.

sixteenth century, half of the 687,000 people under Spanish colonization had been baptized Christian or had been instructed in the Christian faith.⁴

B. FILIPINO ROOTS IN THE AMERICAS (1587-1902)

The establishment of the Spanish colonies and Christianity in the Philippines in the late sixteenth century opened up a trade route between Acapulco in Spanish Mexico (New Spain), Peru (farther south), and Manila. Due to this transpacific passage, some 40,000 to 100,000 Asians, a majority of whom were native Filipinos and mestizos (people of mixed race of Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish descent), eventually made their way to New Spain as sailors, servants, and slaves.⁵ During this time, the present-day US state of California was part of New Spain. The first-recorded *Luzon Indios* (the Spanish name given to Filipinos, meaning Luzon Indians) to arrive in what is presently the United States was on October 18, 1587. They were crew members of the Spanish galleon ship, *Nuestra Señora Esperanza*, that anchored on the California coast, specifically, in Morro Bay (present-day San Luis Obispo County). Eight years later, on November 6, 1595, another Spanish galleon with Filipino crew members was shipwrecked near Point Reyes⁶ (north of present-day San Francisco). Yet none of these first arrivals established any known settlements. As early as the 1830s, Filipino migrant workers, in addition to workers from China, Japan, and Korea, began immigrating to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations. In the 1850s,

-
- 4 Francisco de Ortega, "Report concerning the Filipinas Islands" (1594), translated in Blair and Robinson, *The Philippine Islands*, 9:95-105. In Moffett, "The Spaniards in the Philippines," 155.
 - 5 See Jason Oliver Chang, "Toward a Hemispheric Asian American History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Asian American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 35; Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 20; Jose Maria S. Luengo, *A Making of the Manila-Acapulco Slave Trade (1565-1815)* (Tubigon, Bohol Philippines: Mater Dei Philippines, 1996). While Filipinos were of the majority, the list includes "a sizable number of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asians as well" (Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 21).
 - 6 Joaquin Jay Gonzalez, III, *Filipino American Faith in Action: Immigration, Religion, and Civic Engagement* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 21.

the California Gold Rush reported the presence of “Manilamen” in Mariposa County, California. Later, Filipinos fought during the Civil War. The first sustained settlement of Filipinos in the United States was likely established sometime around 1763. Although the exact date continues to be contested among scholars,⁷ Filipino crew members abandoned their ships and established the village of St. Malo, located on Lake Borgne of St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana.

C. A SUSTAINED PRESENCE: THE FIRST WAVE OF FILIPINO IMMIGRANTS (1903–1934)

A more sustained “first wave” of Filipino immigration occurred following the Spanish-American War and the contentious annexation of the Philippines by the United States in 1898. This wave began with Filipino students (*pensionados* in Tagalog) from 1903 to 1934, studying in universities such as the University of San Francisco (formerly St. Ignatius Academy), Columbia University, and New York University.⁸

The annexation of Hawaii by the United States in 1893 brought in thousands of first-generation Filipino elders (*manongs* in Tagalog) as “special noncitizen US nationals.” During this time period, many of these *manongs* migrated from Hawaii and settled along the West coast to work in the fish canneries in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Thousands also became farmworkers as the agricultural landscape in California and the Pacific Northwest expanded. Other Filipinos immigrated through Ellis Island (New York) as early as 1915.

These varied immigration paths eventually led to communal enclaves, “Little Manilas,” as they were informally called in San

7 Marina E. Espina claims that the year of this first settlement is 1763, while Carmelo Astilla claims places the date a hundred years later, sometime during the 1860s. For an overview of this debate, see Floro L. Mercene, “Filipinos in Louisiana,” in *Manila Men in the New World: Filipino Migration to Mexico and the Americas from the Sixteenth Century* (Diliman, Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2007), 91-117.

8 *Pensionados* were “students on all-expenses paid US government scholarships” who “were recruited to study at American universities” (Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 22).

Francisco and Stockton, California, and in the boroughs of New York City. As a result, a steady growth of Filipinos began to be noticed.⁹ In total, close to 175,000 Filipinos were brought into the United States during the 1903–1934 time period from all places of origin, 90 percent of whom were male and 80 percent of whom were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four.¹⁰ Throughout this time period, Catholic dioceses and parishes pastorally responded to Filipinos' increasing presence by establishing “Catholic Filipino Clubs” and other programs in order to meet the needs of the Filipino community.

D. RACISM AND LEGISLATIVE ACTS: THE SECOND WAVE (1934–1964)

As an outcome of the 1898 annexation of the Philippines by the United States, Filipinos were granted civic status as “nationals,” similar to those from other US territories, including Puerto Rico, Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. Officially, they did not enter as “immigrants” but, similar to the Chinese and the Japanese immigrants, they could not go through the naturalization process and apply for citizenship. The Great Depression of the 1930s heightened racist and xenophobic attitudes and actions toward all minority groups as competition for labor increased. These actions included racial profiling, violence toward and shootings of Filipinos, and anti-miscegenation statutes, which forbade marriage between “white” and “Mongolian” partners.¹¹ This further increased other measures of segregation.

The first wave of Filipino immigration was drastically minimized through a series of US legislative acts, beginning with the

9 “Between 1920 to 1929, a total of 31,092 Filipinos entered California, 80% of whom entered through the port of San Francisco (California Department of Industrial Relations 1930).” See Gomez, 23.

10 Jeffrey M. Burns, Ellen Skerret, and Joseph M. White, eds., *Keeping Faith: European and Asian Catholic Immigrants* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 263-65.

11 Barbara M. Posadas, *The Filipinos Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 22. In addition Bulosan’s memoir, see also Peter Jamero, *Growing Up Brown: Memoirs of a Filipino American* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2006).

1924 Johnson-Reed Act,¹² which called for the absolute prohibition or exclusion of all Asian immigration to the United States.¹³ Ten years later, on March 24, 1934, the Tydings-McDuffie Act became the first official US document specifically targeted toward Filipinos. The Act reclassified Filipinos as aliens (changed from nationals) and restricted Filipino immigration to an annual quota of fifty persons. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 revised the 1924 Act, allotting each Asian nation a minimum quota of one-hundred visas per year, as well as eliminating laws that prevented Asians from becoming naturalized US citizens.¹⁴

During this turbulent time, Filipino migrants in California began to strike against poor work conditions and pay. Led by Larry Itliong, along with Rudy Delvo, Chris Mensalvas, Philip Vera Cruz, and Ernesto Mangaoang, to name a few, Filipino Americans successfully unionized their fellow farmworkers through the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations' (AFL-CIO) Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee.¹⁵ By the early 1960s, Mexican farmworkers, under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, began to strike side-by-side with Filipino American farmworkers in Delano, California. After a series of successful joint strikes that resulted in higher wages for farmworkers, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (led by Itliong) and National Farm Workers Association (led by Chavez) merged to form the United Farm Workers. Itliong served as assistant director

12 The Johnson-Reed Act is also known as the Immigration Act of 1924, the National Origins Act, the Asian Exclusion Act, and the Japanese Exclusion Act.

13 "The 1924 law established a quota system based on national origins. It directed nearly 70% of the immigration slots to northern Europeans, cutting back drastically on immigration from southern and Eastern Europe. It maintained formidable barriers against immigration from Asia and Africa, while leaving immigration from the Western Hemisphere unrestricted—a gesture of hemispheric solidarity that also served the cheap-labor interests of American employers" (Jerry Krammer, "The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965," Center for Immigration Studies [September 2015], <http://cis.org/Hart-Celler-Immigration-Act-1965>).

14 See "The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act)," US Department of State, Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/immigration-act>.

15 See Craig Scharlin and Lilia Villanueva, *Philip Vera Cruz: A Personal History of Filipino Immigrants and the Farmworkers Movement* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2011).